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SUBJECT: REPORT ON ETHIOPIAN SITUATION

REF: SECTO 91

SUMMARY:

NEITHER THE EMPEROR NOR THE IMPERIAL INSTITUTION CAN EVER BE THE SAME IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE CURRENT "REBELLION" OF THE ETHIOPIAN ARMED FORCES. GRAFTING ITSELF ON CIVILIAN DISORDERS AND ECONOMIC PROTESTS OF TEN DAYS AGO IN ADDIS ABABA, THE MILITARY PROTEST HAS NOW SPREAD FROM THE ENLISTED RANKS TO INCLUDE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION BY CAPTAINS AND MAJORS, AIR FORCE AND NAVY UNITS HAVE JOINED WITH THE ARMY TO TAKE CONTROL OF MAJOR INSTALLATIONS OF PUBLIC BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATION IN ASMARA, ADDIS ABABA AND MASSAWA. DEMANDS ARE PRIMARILY ECONOMIC AND NON-IDEOLOGICAL IN NATURE AND AVOID PERSONAL ATTACKS ON THE EMPEROR, BUT THERE

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IS SERIOUS QUESTION WHETHER WAGE INCREASES AND THE EM-

PEROR'S DISSOLUTION OF THE CABINET AND APPOINTMENT OF A NEW PRIME MINISTER, DEFENSE MINISTER AND ARMY COMMANDER WILL HAVE SUBSTANTIAL EFFECT ON CONTINUING DISSIDENCE. NO ANTI-US OR ANTI-FOREIGN ELEMENTS ARE YET APPARENT, NOR IS THERE EVIDENCE OF SOMALIAN OR ERITREAN MISCHIEF TO DATE. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE US RELATIONSHIP WITH ETHIOPIA ARE LIKELY TO BE SUBSTANTIAL BUT PREDICTIONS AT THIS POINT WOULD BE DIFFICULT.

1. WHAT BEGAN AS AN APPARENTLY SPONTANEOUS UPRISING BY ELEMENTS OF THE ETHIOPIAN ARMY SECOND DIVISION AND SECOND AIR GROUP IN ASMARA SPREAD RAPIDLY TO OTHER MAJOR UNITS OF THE ARMED FORCES, INCLUDING THE NAVY HEADQUARTERS IN MASSAWA, THE AIR FORCE HEADQUARTERS AT DEBRA ZEIT, AND FINALLY THE ARMY HEADQUARTERS UNITS IN ADDIS ABABA. AS IT GREW IN SCOPE THE REBELLION DISPLAYED SIGNS THAT IT WAS WELL-ORGANIZED AND COORDINATED AND HAD PERHAPS BEEN PLANNED IN ADVANCE, AND THAT IT WAS AN OUTGROWTH OF A DISSIDENT MOVEMENT ORGANIZED DURING THE PAST TWO MONTHS BY JUNIOR OFFICERS. THE MILITARY UPRISING MAY HAVE BEEN TIMED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF POPULAR DISCONTENT, AS MANIFESTED DURING THE PREVIOUS WEEK WHICH SAW A TEACHERS' STRIKE, STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, AND A STRIKE BY TAXI DRIVERS. A SERIOUS INFLATION, THE PRICE EFFECT OF THE FUEL CRISIS, AND THE SEVERE DROUGHT IN ETHIOPIA HAVE ALL CONTRIBUTED TO THE GENERAL MALAISE. HOWEVER, THE CURRENT CONGRUENCE OF INTEREST BETWEEN THE REBELLING MILITARY AND THE STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND OTHERS WHO WANT TO SEE MORE RADICAL CHANGES MAY NOT LAST BEYOND THE PRESENT CRISIS.

2. IT IS STILL UNCLEAR EXACTLY WHAT LEVEL OF MILITARY PERSONNEL IS IN CONTROL OF THE REBELLION; WHAT IS KNOWN IS THAT NO GENERAL OFFICERS WERE BEHIND IT OR ARE MANAGING IT NOW. THE FIRST SIGNS FROM ASMARA WERE THAT IT WAS MASTERMINDED BY ENLISTED MEN. A BROADCAST PRESENTING 22 DEMANDS TO THE EMPEROR DETAILED LARGELY GRIEVANCES OF ENLISTED PERSONNEL FOR HIGHER PAY, BETTER PENSIONS, INJURY BENEFITS, AND IN GENERAL INSISTING ON THE SAME TREATMENT FOR ENLISTED MEN AS THAT ENJOYED BY OFFICERS. LATER IN-

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DICATIONS ARE THAT THE LEADERS ARE OF THE CAPTAIN AND MAJOR LEVEL, WITH POSSIBLY LT. COLONELS AND COLONELS HAVING JOINED THE REBELLION ONCE IT GOT UNDERWAY. THE LEADERS CONTINUE TO REMAIN NAMELESS AND FACELESS, HOWEVER.

3. THE EMPEROR WAS NOT AND IS NOT YET A TARGET OF THE REBELLION. PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF LOYALTY TO HIM, AND THE FACT THAT THE REBELS HAVE CHOSEN TO NEGOTIATE THEIR DE-

MANDS WITH HIM, INDICATE THAT THE IMMEDIATE GOAL IS NOT TO DEPOSE THE EMPEROR, BUT TO GET HIM TO DECREE SOME DRASTIC CHANGES. TO THE INITIAL ECONOMIC DEMANDS OF THE SOLDIERS WERE ADDED CALLS FOR A COMPLETE CHANGE OF THE CABINET AND THE SENIOR ARMED FORCES LEADERSHIP. THUS FAR THE REBELS HAVE NOT MOVED TO PLACE THEMSELVES IN POWER, BUT ONLY TO FORCE THE EMPEROR TO DO THEIR BIDDING.

4. THE EMPEROR, APPARENTLY REALIZING THE IMMENSE DIFFICULTY, PERHAPS IMPOSSIBILITY, OF GETTING HIS ARMED

FORCES BACK UNDER HIS CONTROL, MOVED FAIRLY SWIFTLY TO TRY TO END THE REBELLION BY ACCEDING TO MOST OF THE REBELS' DEMANDS. HE DISMISSED THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET AND APPOINTED A NEW PRIME MINISTER, DEFENSE MINISTER AND ARMY COMMANDER. HE ALSO GRANTED AT LEAST SOME OF THE ECONOMIC DEMANDS OF THE SOLDIERS, WITH THE SECOND PAY INCREASE IN A WEEK AND OTHER BENEFITS. AT THE SAME TIME HE EXHORTED THE TROOPS, WITHOUT SUCCESS, TO RETURN TO THEIR NORMAL DUTIES.

5. IT IS UNCLEAR AS OF MARCH 1 WHETHER THE REBELS ARE SATISFIED WITH WHAT THE EMPEROR HAS DONE, WHETHER THEY WILL REJECT HIS EFFORTS OR WILL LEVY NEW DEMANDS. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THE ASMARA REBEL GROUP, WHERE THE NCO'S SEEM TO DOMINATE THE SITUATION, ARE SATISFIED THAT THEY HAVE OBTAINED ALL THEY WANT FROM THE EMPEROR, WHILE THE DISSIDENT OFFICERS RUNNING THINGS IN ADDIS ABABA WANT TO MAKE NEW DEMANDS OF THE EMPEROR. IT IS ALSO UNCLEAR WHETHER THE NEWLY APPOINTED PRIME MINISTER, ENDALKATCHEW MAKONNEN, WILL BE ACCEPTED BY THE REBELS. STUDENT-LED DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE ALREADY DENOUNCED THIS APPOINTMENT, THOUGH

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